



State of Tennessee Department of Children's Services

Administrative Policies and Procedures: 26.4

Subject: Telephone Privileges for Youth in DCS Community Residential Facilities

Supersedes: DCS 26.4, 12/01/01

Local Policy: No

Local Procedures: No

Training Required: No

Approved by:

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Application

To All Department of Children's Services Community Residential Facility Employees and Youth.

Authority: TCA 37-5-106

Policy

All youth placed in DCS community residential facilities (group homes) shall be permitted to make at least two collect or local telephone calls per month to his/her immediate family. Every youth shall be allowed to telephone his/her attorney and to make emergency telephone calls. Each facility shall provide for the transmission of messages and information that are program related.

Procedures

A. Rules and guidelines for use of telephones

1. Guidelines and rules concerning the use of telephones by youth shall be approved by the DCS community residential facility supervisor and included in the youth handbook. Such guidelines and rules shall include:
 - a) Location of telephones available for youth to use
 - b) Specific times for telephone calls
 - c) Maximum length of telephone calls permitted
 - d) To whom telephone calls may be made and the recording of all telephone calls on form CS-0327, *Youth*

Telephone Log.

2. During the orientation period, the youth will submit to the case manager a list of people with whom he/she would like to have telephone contact. A list of approved and unapproved telephone contacts will be put in the youth's case file and the list made readily available to all staff.
3. The youth's treatment team may determine to/from whom a youth may make or receive telephone calls other than telephone calls to the immediate family, guardian or attorney.
4. If treatment issues exist, the youth's treatment team shall have the discretion to limit or restrict telephone calls to any immediate family member. The existing issues and subsequent actions shall be recorded in the youth's individual program plan by the team leader and reviewed by the supervisor.
5. In addition to regularly scheduled telephone calls, the youth shall be allowed to make telephone calls at the state's expense to their attorneys during normal workdays and hours. The youth shall not be allowed to regularly interrupt his/her academic and/or vocational training in order to make telephone calls unless they are otherwise unable to contact their attorney after school hours. No time limit shall be placed on telephone calls to attorneys or other legal assistance representatives.
6. Youth shall be allowed to make emergency telephone calls at the discretion of the supervisor or designee if a family or youth crisis arises.
7. In the event of family financial hardship, youth shall be allowed to make two telephone calls per month at the state's expense.
8. The supervisor or designee shall identify hardship cases, after verification by the home county case manager.
9. If the youth's immediate family does not have a telephone, a third party, approved by the parent or guardian, may be designated to receive telephone calls from the youth. The third party may be a neighbor, close family friend or member of the youth's extended family. These telephone calls shall not exceed five minutes in length.

10. Any staff witnessing or having credible knowledge of a youth's abuse of telephone privileges shall report such abuse to the supervisor or designee.
11. If the staff member actually witnesses the abuse, they may issue the youth an incident report and prescribe a sanction as outlined in DCS policy [25.9 Disciplinary Punishment Guidelines for Youth in DCS Community Residential Facilities](#). Telephone calls may be reduced as a disciplinary sanction, but in no case shall a youth be permitted less than four telephone calls per month to members of their immediate family.
12. For repeated abuse of telephone privileges, a youth's telephone privileges, except for those telephone calls outlined in section A., items 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9 above, may be reduced to not less than two telephone calls for a period of up to one month by the hearing officer or discipline committee, if the allegations are substantiated in a disciplinary hearing. Abuse shall include:
 - a) Use of threatening or obscene language during telephone calls,
 - b) Charging telephone calls without proper authorization to do so,
 - c) Making telephone calls to an unauthorized person(s),
 - d) Violation of schedule and duration rules.

B. Monitoring telephone calls

Youth telephone calls shall not be monitored or overheard except:

1. To determine that the youth is talking with an authorized person, and
2. If there is reasonable cause to suspect that there is a breach of security, or the health or safety of staff and/or youth is at risk.

C. Schedule for telephone calls

Regularly scheduled telephone calls to members of the immediate family should take place between the hours of:

1. 4:30 p.m. and 9:00 p.m., CST, on school days

2. 5:30 p.m. and 10:00 p.m., EST, on school days
3. 9:00 a.m. and 9:00 p.m., CST/EST, on weekends and holidays, unless the family's normal schedule dictates otherwise.

Forms/Templates

CS-0327 Youth Telephone Log

Collateral Documents

None.

Standards

3-JCRF-5G-05